

No Stone Unturned

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I have been researching my own ancestry for twenty years. In those first years, I often had the occasion to resort to events from childhood to attempt to piece my family tree together. Recalling a snippet of a conversation, a visit to an elderly “aunt,” clearing the weeds from someone’s grave; these recollections often pointed me further up into my own tree. I still remember those cemetery visits as a child, accompanying my mother, watering can in tow as she touchingly went from plot to plot, pausing here, clearing there, and always a quick prayer. I had no idea who these people were, only that they meant something to my mother. Less than ten years later, there I would be in the same cemeteries, performing the same ritual at those same gravesites, starting with my mother’s.

Those inscriptions would later assist me in my own search for my ancestors. A year of death, location and name is necessary to obtain a copy of a death certificate. A death certificate that usually, but not always, gives the names of the deceased’s parents and their place of birth.

Imagine, if you can, the enjoyment I experienced once I was able to combine my passion, chiropractic, with my favorite pastime, genealogy. While the exact road is the subject of a future article, suffice it to say that events occurring in the early 1990s led me to cite *Ex parte Greenall*, stemming from the 1907 arrest of one C.D. Greenall, in defense of the chiropractic profession in California. After the dust cleared, I was left to wonder who was C.D. Greenall? Thus began my foray into chiropractic history.

During research on Dr. Carl Schultz, another research subject, I had the occasion to visit his gravesite at nearby Inglewood Cemetery. As usual, I visited the cemetery office and inquired about the location of his plot. I also inquired about others that may be interred at the same cemetery. My initial visit was rewarding in that, not only did I locate the Schultz plot, I was also informed that yes, indeed, Charles Cale was buried there as well. In addition, the ashes of another Cale, Astrid Cale, were in one of the mausoleums, in the same niche with the ashes of her daughter Imogene Reed Speros. Both had died on New Year’s Day 1936. Another puzzle: who were these women and what, if any, bearing did they have on the Cale’s that founded the Los Angeles College of

Chiropractic?

As I made my way to the gravesite of Charles Cale, I felt a little sense of awe and excitement. As I stood there, looking around at a huge expanse of brown, dry grass, I had a familiar sinking feeling. He was buried in an unmarked plot! As I stood there, disappointed, I felt that this was an injustice. How could this be? That such an important figure in the lives of hundreds, now thousands, of chiropractors could lie in this dusty, dry, forlorn section of cemetery without so much as a gravestone, was a travesty. It was 1999 and I approached the administration of the college Dr. Cale founded and was received warmly. The school’s alumni association became involved right from the beginning too. Little did I know, or suspect, that six years would pass from conception to fruition. First, were there any living descendants? Did they have any objections? Sounds easy, it isn’t. Three children had survived into adulthood. How to find them and their families? Three years later, I felt I had conducted an exhaustive search and concluded that that was apparently no living descendants that could, or would, object to the placing of a grave marker. Two sons had died in the 1980s and neither had an obituary in the local newspapers. His daughter simply vanished in the early 1940s. (Incidentally, she recently resurfaced and only yesterday did I locate her place and year of death. Okay, so my search wasn’t as exhaustive as I had thought, but this daughter apparently wanted to distance herself from the surname Cale. That name is not to be found on her death certificate anywhere.) So, now what? I had no descendants to sign a letter stating their absence of any objections to the purchase of a grave marker. Luckily, I did have a second family of Dr. Cale’s to turn to. Though not possessing any authority in law to object or not as they were the descendants of Dr. Cale’s second wife, one member did graciously, consent to write a letter stating that, on behalf of his family, there were no objections. Back to the college, letter in hand. Next consideration, who would cover the costs, pick the design and inscription? Meetings came and went and the day came in 2004 when my mail carrier handed me a letter from the director of the alumni association that stated the issue was voted upon and unanimously approved. Success! Or, at least I thought so at that time.

We scheduled a meeting to visit the cemetery office and order the marker. Once there we were politely informed that our request would be gladly fulfilled, pro-

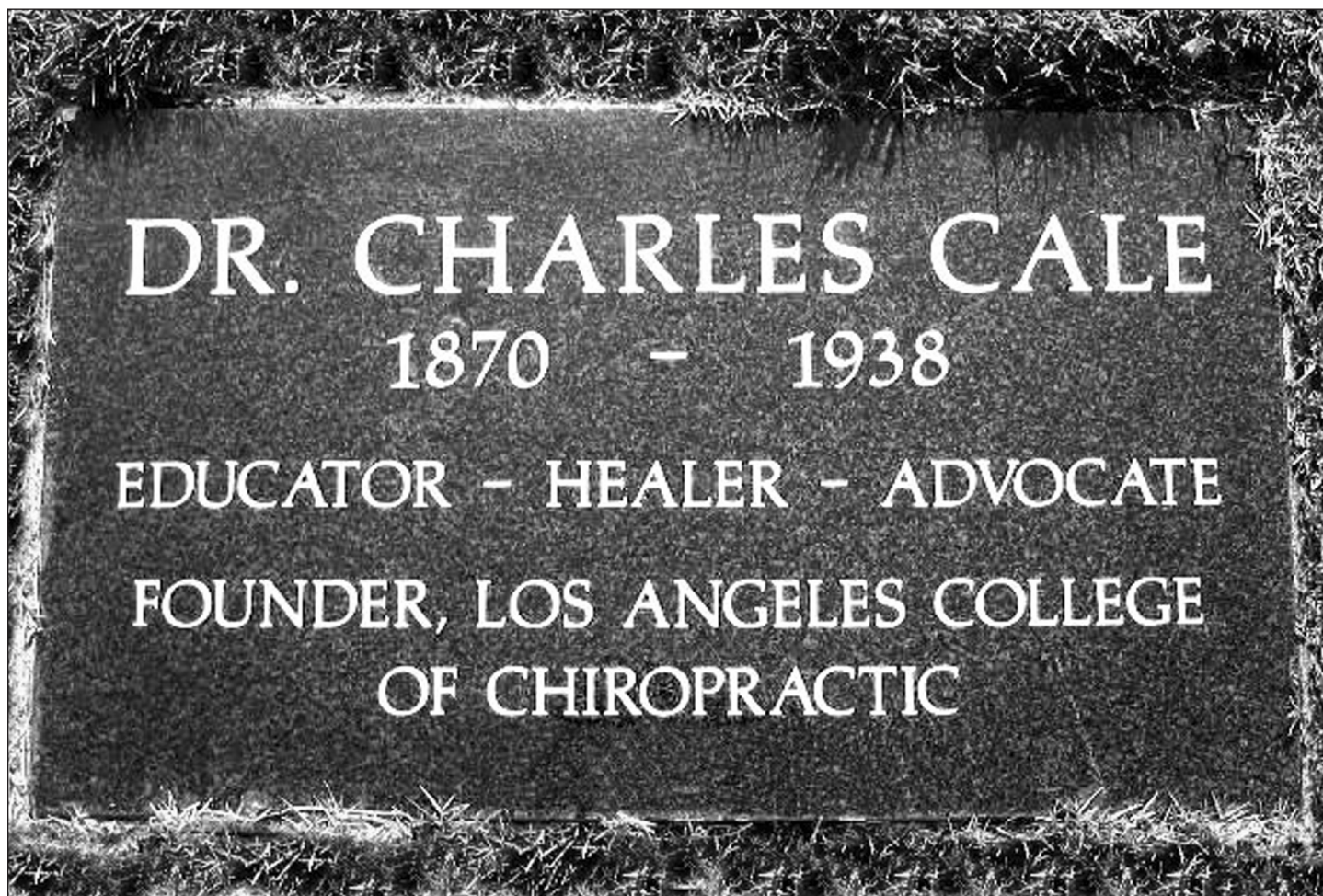
vided we produced a letter of no objection from the plot's owner. Who was this "Nan Smethurst" that owned the plot? A grave site is land and there are deeds covering them. These small tracts of land pass through ownership just as any other parcel of land would. Back to do more research. Nan Smethurst was Charles' younger sister, Fernanda B. Cale. Again, no descendants identified. The cemetery, accepting that they would not be receiving a letter from the owner of record, as Nan had passed away in 1956, granted approval.

However, a new concern surfaced. Not only was Dr. Cale's plot unmarked, but that of his mother-in-law interred in the same cemetery was also unmarked, as was that of his two-year-old son in another cemetery. Were there any cultural or religious prohibitions against have such a memorial? Checking with several sources, none surfaced. What about the wishes of the deceased? This was the only area that it was impossible to obtain an answer. Dr. Cale had accepted many honors during his life and nothing uncovered to date suggested that he

would object to a grave marker. I only hope there wasn't some sort of curse placed on the family generations ago preventing them from having grave markers! After presenting the cemetery administration with our latest findings, they didn't object and now, sixty-seven years later, Dr. Cale no longer lies in an unmarked plot.

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DR. CHARLES CALE

1870 - 1938

EDUCATOR - HEALER - ADVOCATE

FOUNDER, LOS ANGELES COLLEGE
OF CHIROPRACTIC